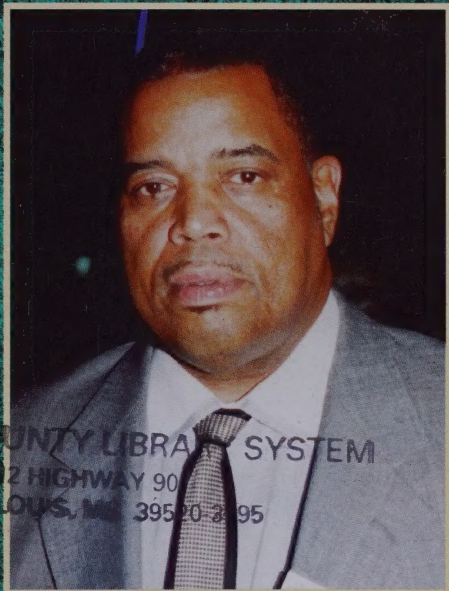
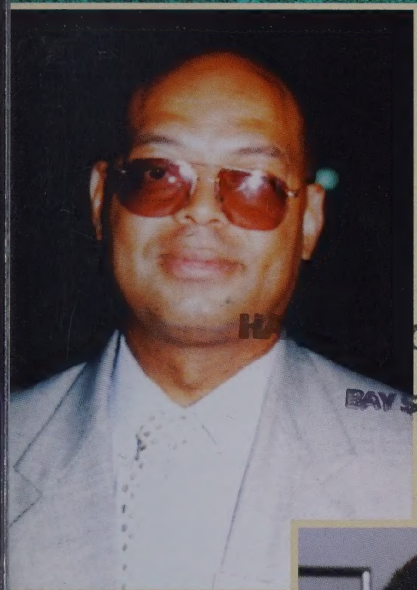


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Leadership Issue

NOVEMBER 1999
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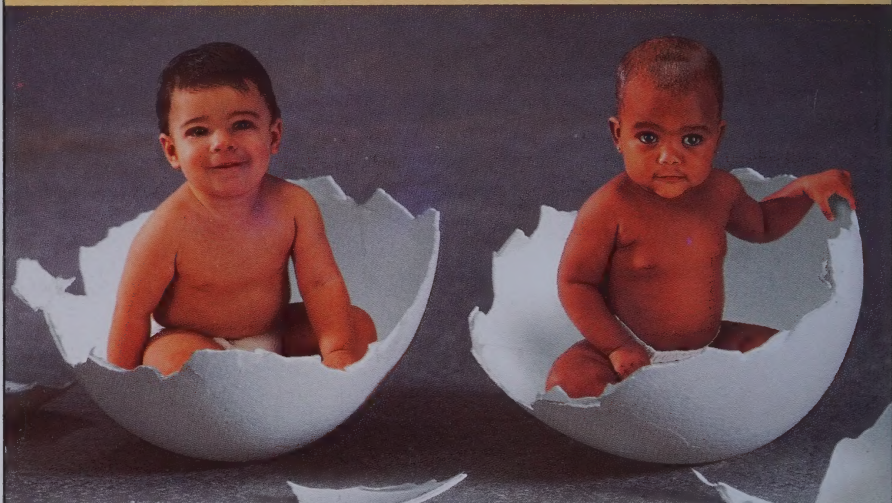
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Review:
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MISSISSIPPI *Star*

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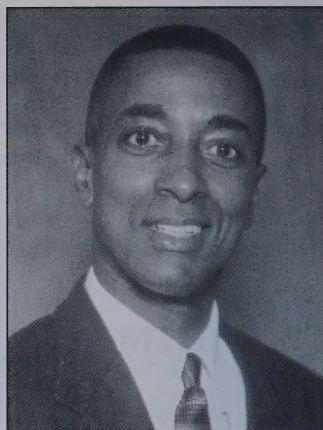
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Maurice Singleton

Most of us have seen the bumper sticker – *If you can read this, thank a teacher.* I've got a statement along the same lines for you: If you can act as an individual, vote for the candidate of your choice, become educated in whatever field of study you choose, or simply have a choice in matters that pertain to you, thank your leaders. Thank your leaders past and present.

Courageous people have stood up for us when we didn't have the freedom, the education, the professional training, the political know-how or the social savvy to act or speak on our own behalf. We are indebted to our leaders for the many sacrifices they've made for our benefit.

A lot of change took place during the 20th Century thanks to the foresight and vision of leaders. Martin Luther King, Jr., Roy Wilkins, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Thurgood Marshall and Franklin Deleanor Roosevelt were all very prominent leaders during this century who made tremendous impact on our lives because of their leadership.

The list of prominent leaders in the United States is obviously a very long one, and unfortunately I don't have the space to list all of them on this page or, for that matter, in this issue. I would like to take the opportunity in this, the *Leadership Issue* of *Mississippi Star* to say thanks to the leaders who risked much

for the masses.

Also, thanks to the local leaders who risked harm to their families and livelihoods by stepping up and fighting wrongs in our society. Dr. Gilbert R. Mason, Dr. Felix Dunn, Mrs. Geraldine Lang, and the late Mr. Vernon Dahmer Sr. and Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer are only a few of the many brave and courageous people whose actions demanded fairness and action during times of blatant unfairness.

As this century comes to a close and a new one begins, many familiar leaders have retired after years of fighting for the people. Their energies and efforts continue in a new generation of leaders.

In this issue, presidents of several NAACP branches talk about the issues and challenges they face. The issues they encounter are quite different from the issues of the 1950s and '60s, however they appear to be just as challenging.

Best wishes to these new leaders who have willingly inherited tremendous responsibility for the benefit of all of us.



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LETTERS

Life

How did I get life? The movie, video and song portrayed by Eddie Murphy and Martin Lawrence in two hours of laughter. But I'm not laughing, because I was given a 30-year sentence for one – 1 – transfer of crack cocaine – 4/10 of a gram to be exact. Isn't that life at the age of 48?

I understand that I am responsible for my actions and I admit to having a drug problem, which I've had since leaving Viet-Nam in 1970. I'm a 100% disabled veteran who suffers from P.T.S.D. from that experience.

I feel remorseful to my mother who works hard in the community and constantly tells the boys on the block not to end up "like my son" with a life in the penitentiary. "Find a better way; you heard me!"

Russell Nichols

*East Mississippi Correctional Facility
Meridian, MS*



Mississippi Star

I am enjoying my magazine. I am a believer of Law and Order and Equal Justice under the Law.

I welcome the articles written by Judge Whitfield. I am glad I voted for him.

Mrs. L.L. Williams

Bay St. Louis, MS

To Mississippi Star:

Are We still Colored/Separated

I recently called a friend in Bay St. Louis (Hancock County) for her to pick up a copy of my marriage license. I was married 25 years ago in Hancock County at St. Rose de Lima Catholic Church. My friend informed me that there was no copy on file. So after two days of numerous phone calls, I then received results. After searching records my document was finally located. I was glad it was found but where it was found is what amazed me – in the Colored Book of Records! I'm sure we were not the only Black married couple in Hancock County 25 years ago, which leads me to believe that these records are still valid and kept there.

My question is to the people of the state of Mississippi: Are we still in a segregated system? We will enter into the new millennium very shortly, with advanced computer technology. For this reason it becomes an insult to not only me but people of the African-American race, to still have segregated files kept away obviously in a morgue of files not updated into a new non-segregated system. I feel committed to share this information with people of Hancock County, State of Mississippi, because it is an example of still existing racism and segregation. I'm saddened to know that there is little change as far as racism is concerned going into a new era still plagued by these prevalent issues.

Respectfully,
Yvette Maurice-Jackson
Redlands, California

Letters to the Publisher

should be 100 words or less.

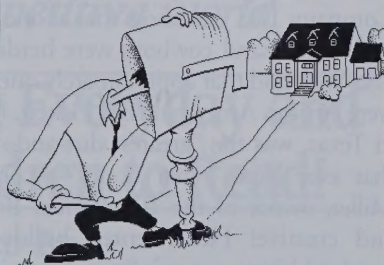
Star Calendar: Events of interest to South Mississippians should be submitted on your organization's letterhead, specifying the date, time, place of event and a number of contact. Submissions should be received by the twentieth day of the preceding month.

Be sure to include a daytime telephone number.

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November already, where has the year gone? The closer we get to the new year and especially this new year, the more reflection seems to take place. Where have we been, where are we, where are we going?

This month's theme of leadership also should encourage each of us to think about leadership in our homes and in our communities. Leadership: It's one of those words that bring to mind different things for each of us. Some think of famous people, others think of people in their own family! Who do you consider a leader? Who does your child follow as a leader? A little food for thought!

The books reviewed this month will be donated to North Bay Elementary School located in Bay St. Louis, MS. If any of you have a favorite school you would like added to the list to receive books, just let me know and it will be done.



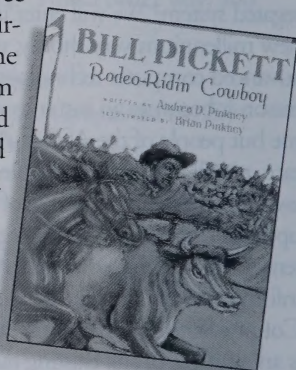
Bill Pickett Rodeo-Ridin' Cowboy written by Andrea D. Pinkney, illustrated by Brian Pinkney and published by Harcourt Brace & Company. Did you know that at one time about thirty-five thousand cowboys were herding cattle in the Old West and that approximately one fourth of them were African American? Bill Pickett, born and raised in Texas, was the "greatest dirt-and-sweat cowhand that ever lived – bar none," according to Zach Miller, owner of the 101 Ranch. Bill was fearless and creative! He invented bulldogging which involved biting a steer's lip to bring it down! Bill's fame spread far and wide and this book has really wonderful illustrations. Bill was the first African American inducted into the National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; and a bronze statue image of him stands at the Fort Worth Cowtown Coliseum in Fort Worth, Texas. This book is printed on great paper and has really good type set and is a joy to read.



Geronimo, written by Russell Shorto is one of Alvin Josephy's Biography Series of American Indians. It is illustrated by L.L. Cundiff and published by Silver Burdett Press. Remember when we were taught as children that Christopher



by Herta Smith



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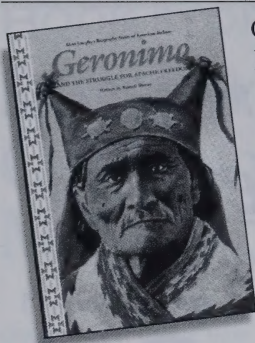
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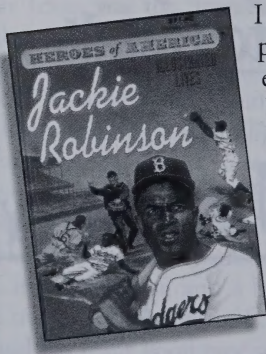
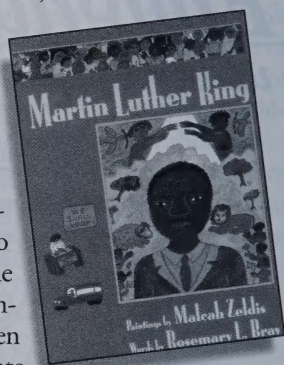
Charles B. Benvenutti CPA, PA



Columbus discovered America? America was never lost! Native people had lived in America for over 10,000 years before Columbus sailed to the New World. One of the greatest of these Indian leaders was Geronimo. Geronimo fought and struggled to keep his people free for most of his adult life; and even long after he lost that fight he was admired and in some circles feared. This book has some really nice photographs and clear maps and tells the real story of the Indians' fight to keep their land, their dignity and their freedom.



Martin Luther King, words by Rosemary L. Bray, paintings by Malcah Zeldis and published by Greenwillow Books. I know, I know, it's not Black History Month but I have often wondered why we focus on great African American leaders during February. This book is too good to wait for February. It tells not just of the Civil Rights movement for African Americans but the struggle for equality in the economic arena for all Americans. Ms. Bray's book is only 47 pages long but it is so eloquent, so moving and so inspiring for anyone who reads it. I recommend it for the whole family. The paintings for this book were done by an internationally known folk artist. Her work hangs in fourteen museums all over the world and in numerous private collections. The paintings and the words found in this book are informative, enlightening and entertaining.



I am also recommending a series of books for young people entitled *Heroes of America*. These books are edited by Joshua Hanft and Rochelle Larkin and published by Waldman Publishing Corp. The people featured in this series include George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Martin Luther King, Jr., Eleanor Roosevelt, Daniel Boone, Jackie Robinson, Clara Barton and Babe Ruth. I especially like the Jackie Robinson story. Leader is too small a word to describe this man who not only changed baseball, but changed history and helped change America as well.

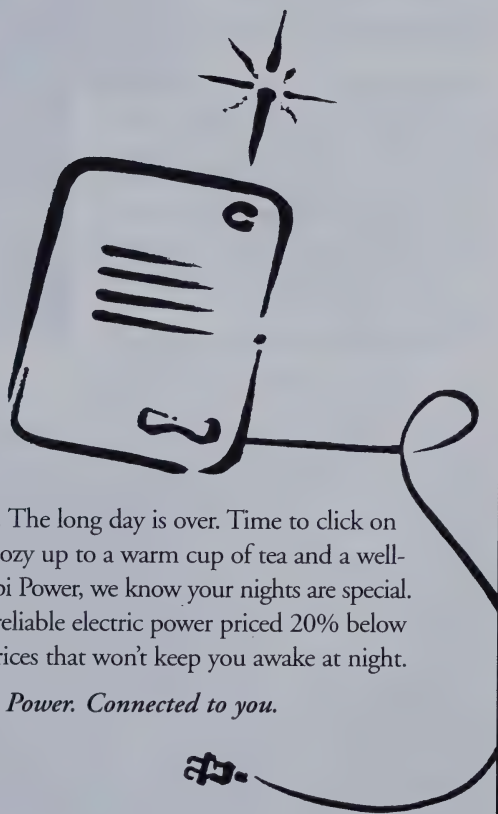
A good web site for general and specific information with regard to literacy and reading is www.halfpricebooks.com.

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MOVIE REVIEW

The Best Man

By Maurice E. Singleton, Jr.

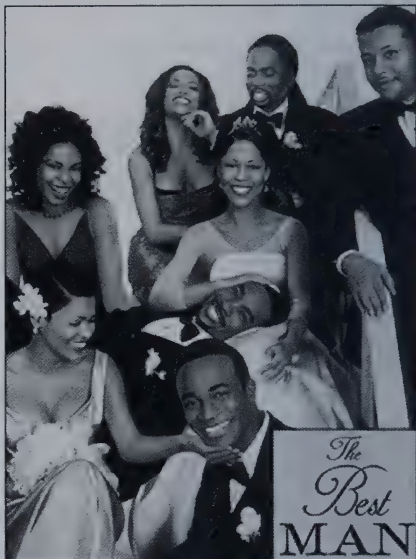
Rarely have I gone to see a movie that I wanted to see again soon.. I want to see *The Best Man* again because it was a great movie. The characters were so well developed; the movie had a great story line; the chemistry between the actors was great; and it was a movie to which I could relate.

College friends reunite for the wedding of campus sweethearts. Ty Diggs of *How Stella Got Her Groove Back* fame is the best man. He plays the role of a writer on the verge of a very successful launch of his first novel, *Unfinished Business*. Diggs' character arrives in New York a couple of days before the wedding, only to learn that a draft of the novel has been circulating among his buddies.

The friends all see themselves in the story, including the groom, played by Morris Chestnut who co-starred in *Boyz in the Hood*. Chestnut's character is a professional football player who has agreed to get married during the football season, because he'll do "anything" to please his bride.

Most of the focus in this nearly two-hour movie is on the four male characters. Each character has his own, very distinct social characteristics that consistently carry the story from light intrigue to a compelling finish.

Diggs' and Chestnut's characters are



accompanied by two other men in the wedding party. One is a henpecked, self-assurance-seeking attorney; and the other is a streetwise, self-proclaimed "pimp." Guess who planned the *bachelor's party*?

The story has some language issues but it certainly does not glorify vulgarity. Any foul language is limited to the perspective of the character who uses it. The language issues are by far overshadowed by the quality of the movie.

Director Malcolm D. Lee, a relative of the famed director Spike Lee has a real winner with *The Best Man*. During the time of the movie's release, there was a great deal of discussion regarding whether a movie with a predominantly African-American cast could compete with other box office hits. On the third weekend after its release, *The Best Man* was still out-grossing much of the competition and playing to diverse audiences in crowded theaters.

PEOPLE

Judge Robin Alfred Midcalf of the County Court in Gulfport (Harrison County), Mississippi, has completed the *General Jurisdiction* course held September 27 – October 15, 1999 at The National Judicial College in Reno, Nevada.

General Jurisdiction is NJC's flagship course for general jurisdiction judges and is aimed at those who are relatively new to the bench. The course helps new judges to discover the processes that work best for them and aids them in feeling more comfortable in the role of judge. The course examines substantive law and procedural issues, trial techniques, and a myriad of other topics.



The National Judicial College was featured on "60 Minutes" as the leading continuing education center for state trial court judges, state and federal administrative law judges, tribal court judges and military court judges. Since its founding in 1963, more than

52,000 certificates of completion have been issued to graduates who are judges from all 50 states and more than 150 foreign countries. Alumni include U.S. Supreme Court Justices Sandra Day O'Connor and David Souter. U.S. Supreme Court Justices Anthony Kennedy and John Paul Stephens have served as lecturers.

Lieutenant Colonel Patrick Barnes is the chief of the media branch, Regional Headquarters Allied Forces Southern Europe, Naples, Italy. He is responsible for providing media guidance throughout NATO's southern region. He oversees AFSOUTH's and subordinate command's media interaction with local, regional, national and international media outlets from all across the Mediterranean and Western Europe.

The lieutenant colonel entered the Air Force in July 1983 after graduating from college and receiving his commission through the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps. During his 16-year career, the major has per-

formed public affairs duties in Illinois, Portugal, Montana, Okinawa, Japan,

Korea and Texas. He has served in key public affairs positions at the major command, air division, wing and detachment level. In addition to his permanent assignments, he deployed and performed contingency public affairs duties during Operation RESTORE HOPE in Somalia, Operation JOINT ENDEAVOR in Bosnia, and Operation QUICKLIFT in Croatia.

Lieutenant Colonel Barnes is married to the former Claudia Michelle Miggins of Chicago. They have four children: Langston, Vivian, Maya and Emily.



Lieutenant Patrick Barnes and his wife Claudia with their four children from left, Emily, 2, Langston, 7, Vivian, 5, and Maya, 3.

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NAACP PRESIDENTS DISCUSS ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

By Maurice E. Singleton, Jr.

James Crowell is the second president of the Biloxi Branch of the NAACP. He succeeded Dr. Gilbert R. Mason, Sr., who served as president of the Biloxi branch for more than thirty-four years.

Crowell appears to be optimistic regarding the special talents of the NAACP members as well as for the future of his constituents who call Biloxi home.

"Through the housing authority there is a plan to tear down Bayou View Housing Projects and build new single family homes," Crowell explained. "Mr. Delmar Robinson is the



James Crowell

chairperson for housing in our branch, and he is also chairman of the board for the Biloxi Housing Authority.

"Mr. Jimmy Roy is our community liaison chairperson and he also serves on the Biloxi School Board. Biloxi just approved a bond issue to build two

"My vision for the youth branch is to develop some entrepreneurship-type training to make them more computer literate. We are trying to get computers to allow them to use them during the week after school."

-- James Crowell

new schools in Ward Two. We are elated to get two new schools in Ward Two.

"We have a few worker bees, but those who work, do very well," Crowell explained.

The issues the NAACP Biloxi Branch deals with on a regular basis extend beyond school and housing issues. The organization is constantly bombarded with calls from employees

who feel they have been treated unfairly.

"We have several instances where people were dismissed from the casinos without legal recourse," Crowell explained. "We are constantly bombarded with requests from casino employees who feel that they are not getting their day in court when they are accused of infractions. It is hard to get back in with the human resources people to talk with them about these cases. In one instance we went to talk to a human resource individual and we were escorted out by security without the opportunity to talk even though we had made an appointment."

The issues that Crowell gets called on run the gamut. Whenever someone in the community does not know who to call, they usually call the NAACP. That is the way it has always been.

Very recently, Crowell was called about a 15-year old girl who was stopped by a policeman for a broken tail light. The girl was told to get out of the car. According to Crowell, the girl was forced to the ground and arrested.

"They were on their way home. The girl's mother was in the car. Her mother is very sickly," said Crowell. "The girl was thrown to the ground and maced. She was charged with assault. This girl weighs about 110 pounds. The officer weighs approximately 180-185 pounds at the least. This situation could have been handled a whole lot differently.

"When we tried to get her released they told us that it was a felony charge and that she had to stay overnight. I am not trying to condone any wrong doing. I am just saying that this could have been handled differently. He could have given her a ticket. Now she has to get a lawyer."

Another challenge for most NAACP branches is increasing membership and developing leaders for the future of the organization. During the five years since Crowell's presidency began, the Biloxi branch of the NAACP has seen roughly a 30% increase in membership. Biloxi has approximately 250 paid members,

including nearly 100 life members.

"Basically my challenge is to develop a strong youth branch," said Crowell. "My vision for the youth branch is to develop some entrepreneurship-type training to make them more computer literate. We are trying to get computers to allow them to use them during the week after school.

"We have approximately 30 youth members. The youth branch is independent of the adult branch. The only adult who gives recommendations to them is their supervisor. It gives them the opportunity to grow and to learn how to be leaders."

•••••

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Curley Clark is president of the Moss Point-Jackson County Branch of the NAACP. Clark held the position for 16 years prior to being re-elected a year ago.

A single issue has captured his full attention during the past two months: the death of Marcus Malone while in police custody. Malone's body was discovered on the floor of his jail cell at approximately 11:15 p.m. on September 13, 1999 after being arrested at 9:06 p.m.

An initial autopsy requested by the Jackson County Coroner supported that the cause of death was drug-induced heart failure. A second autopsy requested by Malone's family concluded that the cause of death was due to strangulation from a chokehold.

A third autopsy was performed by pathologists in Jackson. Their findings were turned over to the grand jury and were deemed inconclusive as to the cause of death.

According to Clark, the investigation into wrongdoing on the part of



Curley Clark

law enforcement officials continues. The FBI will be investigating Malone's death, and the results of the autopsy reports will be studied at the Federal Crime Lab.

"They will get the autopsy report and they will make the determination and proceed from there," said Clark. "The Justice Department has assured me that the FBI will be given author-

"We have police departments utilizing excessive force using racial profiling in dealing with suspects," added Clark. "Somehow, justice is not being distributed equally. Our young black males are falling victims to it."

— Curley Clark



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ity to intensify their investigation.

"I think that the most amazing thing about what's taking place here is we have a majority black city officials, and we are still being subjected to the same type of police abuse of power as we were subjected to back in the 60' and 70s.

"What is so mind-boggling is that back then, most of the administration was white. Now that we've gained a certain amount of representation at the city level, we thought we'd get the same amount of justice as everybody else, but we're not. The NAACP is still needed.

"The police department is majority white. For whatever reason, the police department does not reflect the racial makeup of the community."

Moss Point has a population of approximately 18,000 citizens. An estimated 65% are of African American descent. Less than 25% of Moss Point police officers are African American.

Clark said that there had been a number of alleged beatings. He had heard about how complainants had been mishandled by the local authorities.

"We dismissed them because they had been repeat offenders," said Clark. "Marcus Malone's situation kind of brought it all to a head.

"We have police departments utilizing excessive force using racial profiling in dealing with suspects," added Clark.

"Somehow, justice is not being distributed equally. Our young black males are falling victims to it."

• • • • •

Rev. Lee Edward Morris, Sr. is in the 2nd year of a two-year term as president of the NAACP Hancock County Branch. He says that his vision is "to build more character" for the local organization and to better inform the community of what the NAACP is all about and what it represents. He expects that the NAACP Hancock County Branch will grow from approximately 75 current members to 100+ members between now and November of 2000.

"We'd like to reach our goal of 100 members by then," Rev. Morris explained. "We want to do more com-



Rev. Lee Edward Morris, Sr.



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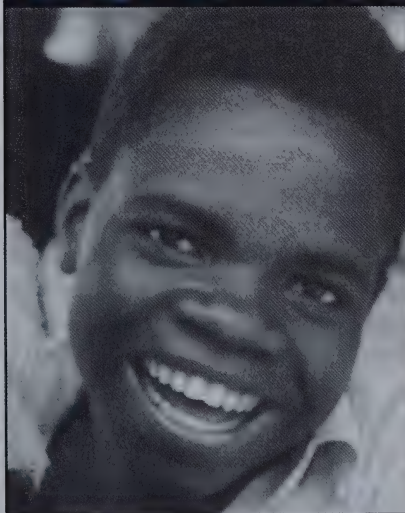
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munication with the people of Hancock County.”

Rev. Morris said that the organization still plays a very vital role in the community, particularly coming to

“Most of the challenges we are facing are on the jobs,” he added. “We need to see more African Americans employed in our school systems. More on the sheriff’s and police departments. We need more members of our community involved in city and county government.

— Rev. Lee Edward Morris, Sr.

the aid of members of the community who do not know where to go when they feel they have been wronged or treated unreasonably on the job or in the schools.

“Most of the challenges we are facing are on the jobs,” he added. “We need to see more African Americans employed in our school systems. More on the sheriff’s and police departments. We need more members of our community involved in city and county government.

“Most of our plan of attack is to sit down with these heads of government and business and meet with them. We’ve got a new sheriff and we are going to be meeting with him.

“We don’t see any black teachers in our public schools who can play a role in the lives of our children. I am not saying that white teachers are not doing good work. But when you don’t have black teachers and you have a large percentage of black students, our students miss out on important role model relationships.

“When I was in school, I had some black teachers. When they spoke, everybody listened. They did whatever it took to instill in us that if we didn’t apply ourselves in school, we wouldn’t make it in life. These teachers encouraged me to go further and to achieve beyond what I might have thought was acceptable,” Rev. Morris added.

“We want our education committee to get more involved with the school system,” Rev. Morris explained.

“Our parents need to take a second look and have conferences with teachers and principals.”

Rev. Morris recently completed the Doctorate of Divinity program at Slidell Baptist College. He is the pastor New Home Missionary Baptist Church of Gautier, MS. He is married to Diane Jones Morris who is the presiding secretary of the local NAACP Hancock County Branch. They have three children: a son, Lee Morris, Jr.; two daughters, Halcyon and Nicole; and a granddaughter Leah Morris.

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Something to Pray About...

BLESS THE OATMEAL

by Stacy James Mackey

Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep, if I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take. This is my favorite part — now we get to bless folks, “Bless mama, bless da da, bless sissy, bless grandma and papa Mackey...” This is the prayer I recite with my children before they sleep. My two and half year old son has mastered blessing everyone he knows so now I let him pray about whatever is on his heart.

Some days he really surprises me with what he thanks God for such as his bike, the picture of the guitar on his wall or the friends he sees at story time at the library. What pleases me is that he has already learned to give thanks for his basic needs. “Dear God bless the oatmeal, pajamas and William’s bed.

Amen!” my son always refers to himself in the third person. Then he says,

“William did good!” with a huge smile.

As I try to grow in my personal relationship with Christ, I often think about the scripture, “In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” Phillipians 4:6. I



find myself trying to pray more often throughout the day and become more aware of the things around me that I should be giving God praise for. I know that I’m guilty of still taking much for granted. I started really listening to my son’s prayers. William thanks God for animals, books, washing hands, all of his friends on Sesame Street,

church and more. I often find myself trying to pray like my son.

Recently my son woke up at 2:30 a.m. In my efforts to get him to go back to sleep, I began our prayer. This particular night he only blessed one person, one of my husband’s co-workers. The following day, I was speaking with this friend and she said how she was up late trying to pray about some problems that were bothering her. We compared times and I told her how my son had prayed for her during that same hour.

My son has taught me is that you don’t have to be a certain age or level of spiritual maturity to pray for others and to have a heart filled with thanksgiving. Prayers of the righteous availeth much even when they come from the tiniest of voices. I hope I’ve given you something to “bless” about.

FROM THE BENCH

CRIME IS DECREASING: DO YOU KNOW WHY?

by Judge John H. Whitfield

Crime in America has dropped to its lowest level in the past three decades. For the seventh straight year, the FBI reported a decrease in both the number and rate of violent crimes which includes murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Besides the decrease in violent crimes, there has also been a noticeable decrease in the major property crimes — burglary, auto theft, and larceny.

In 1998, victims of crime reported a total of 12,475,634 crimes to some 17,000 law enforcement agencies across the country. This represents a 5.4 percent decrease in crimes committed in America from the previous year. More important, it represents a 12 percent decrease in criminal activity since 1989. This is a significant decrease.

You may be wondering, what has caused such a drastic change over the past few years? The answer is not a simple one. Some observers attribute the decrease in crime to a renewed partnership and cooperative spirit between the community and law enforcement. Politicians in Washington attribute the decrease to more police officers being on the streets. Still others say that it is because of the persistent efforts to keep guns out of the hands of children that crime has decreased.

However, I believe the primary reason for the decrease in the criminal activity in America is a change of philosophy in answering the question why do people



commit crimes and what should be done when they do.

There are various theories offered to justify or explain the goals and objectives of punishing someone who violates the law. The more traditional theories of punishment include **retribution, incapacitation, rehabilitation, restoration and deterrence.**

Judges consider these theories when devising or fashioning a sentence. Sometimes, however, one theory of punishment may conflict with another or one may completely dominate all others. At this point the Judge must use his or her discretion in the sentencing process to speak for the community he or she represents. Sentencing guidelines — like those imposed upon Federal Court Judges — take away a Judge's discretion. Sometimes such guidelines result in very harsh and unintended sentences or very lenient sentences when a more severe sentence would be more appropriate.

Like Solomon, Judges must gain the wisdom and insight that one develops only through the experience of being a Judge while at the same time being mindful of what is important to the community which he or she serves. Through experience, Judges develop a very valuable skill, that is, the ability to discern the true spirit of those appearing before him or her. Therefore, it is important that Judges have the ability to fashion sentences that are

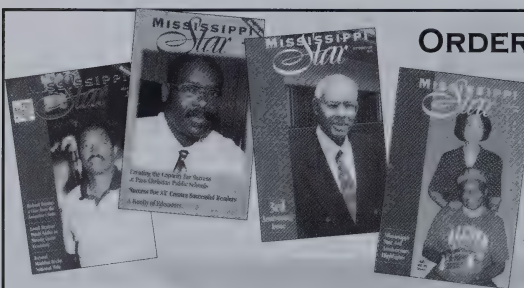
individually tailored to address the wrong done and to meet the goals and objectives of the individual Judge's sentencing philosophy and community concerns.

The theory of **retribution** is primeval in nature. In essence, when retribution is the primary objective of a Judge's sentencing philosophy, the idea is not to deter others in the future from committing such crimes — although deterrence may be an unintended byproduct of such a philosophy — but to punish the individual for his or her misconduct. Retribution gives the community an opportunity to unleash its vengeance upon one who engages in criminal activity.

The theory of **incapacitation** is very similar to retribution. The belief is that if a criminal is incapacitated, either by way of execution, confinement, or another form of restraint or exile, the criminal cannot

continue to prey upon society in the future. Thus, incapacitation is viewed as a way to protect society and to provide a safe community within which the residents can live.

The theory of **rehabilitation** often conflicts with that of retribution and incapacitation. Judges who focus primarily on rehabilitation as their principle objective when punishing one who engages in criminal activity believes that rehabilitation of the offender will help the offender avoid a life of crime in the future. By giving an offender certain educational opportunities, drug and alcohol treatment or counseling, job training, mental health counseling, life coping skills, parenting training, and the like, the offender — it is hoped — will then become a productive member of society, thereby extricating him or herself from a life of crime.



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The theory of **restoration** as a form of punishment takes a much different approach than any other theory of punishment. Restoration focuses on the victim. Restoration is a victim-oriented approach that seeks to "restore" the victim to the state he or she would have been in had the crime not occurred. Requiring restitution (money) to be paid by the offender to the victim for his or her loss, allowing the victim to be present at all major stages of the criminal prosecutorial process, encouraging the victim to testify or make a statement at the offender's sentencing concerning how the criminal conduct has affected his or her life, and forcing the offender to face his or her victim to apologize or ask forgiveness are but a few of the techniques used to restore the victim. Many believe that using this sentencing technique as part of an overall scheme helps to repair the harm caused to the victim by the offender's conduct and further reconciliation between the victim, the offender, and the society.

Many states have enacted a Victim's Bill of Rights. Mississippi is among those states who have enacted such a law. The Bill became effective January 1, 1999, and is known as the "Mississippi Crime Victims' Bill of Rights."

The final theory of punishment is that of **deterrence**. The theory of deterrence is the thread that binds all forms or theories of punishment together. Those Judges whose primary focus is that of deterrence believe that punishment should dissuade not only the individual offender from committing the same or similar crimes in the future but that it should also discourage others in the general population from engaging in such conduct. The recent waves of alternative sentencing often called "public shaming" or "humiliation" are good examples of sentencing techniques

that certainly deter criminal activity by others.

It is important to note that no one theory of punishment will serve as a panacea for reducing crime. However, developing, implementing, and utilizing a balanced approach to punishment is important. Considering each theory and giving it the appropriate weight under the circumstances is important. America has seen a steady decline in the number of crimes being committed because Judges understand this idea more today than ever before.

Although it is believed that Judges should incapacitate repeat or habitual offenders for long periods of time, Judges have worked hard to rehabilitate first-time offenders and to restore victims whenever possible. One cannot escape the fact that 98 percent of all offenders incarcerated in the state of Mississippi will one day be released. Without skills sufficient to find gainful employment those individuals are likely to once again resort to a life of crime.

If America is to continue to enjoy the steady decline in criminal activity, Judges must continue to focus primarily on incapacitation, rehabilitation, and restoration as the principle theories of punishment. Legislators and policy makers should also provide funding for early childhood intervention programs, education and job training. The problem of crime in America is one where you can pay now by investing in the youth of today or you can pay later by building more jails at an average cost of approximately \$42,000.00 per bed for a new prison in Mississippi to \$120,000.00 per bed for a federal prison in Colorado. Last year alone there were 1,800,000 people incarcerated in America. That is one out of every one hundred and fifty people living in the United States.

Of that number, 18,190 inmates were



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locked up in Mississippi — as of October 25, 1999. This represents an increase of approximately 159 percent in the overall prison population in Mississippi over the last five years. At the present rate of growth, the total number of individuals incarcerated in this State will exceed 40,500 by the year 2010, at a present day cost of at least \$28,000 per year. Ironically at the present time, the oldest inmate incarcerated in a state penal institution is 86 years of age and the youngest inmate is only eleven. Yes, I said eleven and he is serving a life sentence. If this eleven year old child lives a normal life — with a life expectancy of approximately 75 years — society will have to pay close to \$2,000,000 to warehouse him while he serves his sentence and pays his debt to society. Thus tax payers will have to shell out more money in the future to incarcerate younger inmates.

Currently, there are 1,699 individuals on parole and 13,647 on probation. All total there are 33,533 individuals in Mississippi on parole, probation or incarcerated in a State penal institution.

The question we must answer as a society is can we afford to continue on this path? The answer is not a simple one but ultimately the choice is yours.

Nothing in this article is intended as legal advice. For legal advice, consult an attorney of your choice. "From the Bench with Judge John Whitfield" is a public information service cosponsored by WBSL 1190 AM and "The Mississippi Star." "From the Bench with Judge John Whitfield" airs each Thursday at 4:00 p.m. on WBSL Radio 1190 AM. Judge John Whitfield can be reached at P.O. Box 351 Biloxi, MS 39533-0351 or by e-mail at JHWhitfield@goldinc.com.

BRIEFS

EAST PARK PLAYERS PERFORM AT FAIR



The East Park Elementary choir and dance company performed during Family Night at the County Fair on October 19, 1999, at 6:30 p.m. in the Fair Hall. The dance troop put on *Ease on Down the Road*, from the Broadway musical *The Wiz*. Augustus Fulton Walley, played the cowardly lion; Ashley Watson, was Dorothy; Troy gurney, the scarecrow; and Shawn Lavant, the Tinman. The choir also sang songs ranging from popular favorites to gospel. Both groups are under the direction of East Park music teacher Linda Whirl.



Shantal Smith, a student at Kreole Elementary, enjoys a horseback ride during the Kreole Elementary Fall Festival on October 30th. In addition to horseback riding, students and community members enjoyed face painting, cake walks, and other games featured during the event. Parents, volunteers and teachers—such as Darlene Jones and Nina Davis, who loaned their horses for the event—provided a fun Saturday's entertainment for Kreole's extended family.

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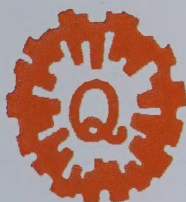
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